MEMORANDUM:

30 JUN 1952

SUBJECT : Application of Archaeology

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I feel that the following provocative memorandum prepared by Mr. [redacted] (I/Air) should be of interest to analysts throughout ORR.

"One of the suggestions made to I/Air by Mr. Josephs on his November 1951 visit was that the methods and techniques of archaeology be studied for possible application to our work. He held that archaeological research was kindred to our own brand of research.

"This seemed rather far-fetched, and no immediate action was taken. Lately, however, a "popularized" book titled "Gods, Graves, and Scholars (The Story of Archaeology)" by C. W. Ceram, has provided a relatively painless avenue of approach. The results are somewhat surprising.

"One of the first men discussed in the book is Schliemann, who discovered the site of Troy. This was done by accepting the "Iliad" as truth, and following directions given therein. Previously, the "Iliad" had been considered to be fiction. It should be noted that Schliemann was something of a prodigy. In two years he learned six languages; he became a millionaire, and devoted his later years (1860 on) to digging. This included work at Mycenae and Tiryns. In all cases, he reasoned in logical steps, basing his reasoning on knowledge of the ancient texts, of ancient customs, and of human capabilities (for instance; Achilles chased Hector three times around the walls of Troy; this came to nine miles at the site favored by Schliemann, but would have been impossible at sites previously attributed. Schliemann concluded that a nine-mile run "was not beyond the powers of warriors caught up in the heat of a grudge fight".)

"The story of Champollion, who deciphered the trilingual Rosetta Stone (hieroglyphs, demotic script, and Greek) and opened the way to the understanding of ancient Egyptian, is the story of another prodigy. By the age of sixteen he had mastered half a dozen oriental languages, plus Latin and Greek. This included Coptic, which he felt was closest to the original Egyptian. Champollion immersed himself in Egyptology, trying to think and reason like a member of that ancient and alien civilization. He became known as "the Egyptian", wore native clothes, and was, in short, somewhat of a maniac. Nevertheless (or perhaps because of this) he succeeded, in twelve years of work, in completing the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone. This task had been attacked by dozens of men, without success.

"It should be noted that Thomas Young, a naturalist unschooled in philology, made some steps towards deciphering the stone. He progressed by sheer genius, ingenuity, and extraordinary intuition. Even so, he was unequipped with the necessary knowledge, and fell short of complete deciphering.

"Grotefend, the German school teacher who impulsively deciphered the Babylonian Tablets on a bet, seems to have been strictly non-prodigy. He was thoroughly acquainted, through the Greek writers, with Persian history. He deduced the method of writing the "wedge" characters, and thereby, which was top and bottom of the baked clay tablets. He examined New Persian to find clues to Old Persian, and proceeded by logical steps to break the code. This is an example of brilliant reasoning based on knowledge of a patently unrelated facts from different sources.

"The deduction of the existance of a Sumerian culture, predating any other known one, was based on consideration of the later Babylonic scripts, particularly such questions as the origin of the characters, linguistic relationships, multiple meanings of cuneiform groups, etc. So complicated a system must have been handed down, over a period of time. Thus, solely on the basis of the language, a previous race was deduced, its probable characteristics and origin postulated; and all was proven true by later excavations.

"The Mayan calendar (more accurate than our Gregorian calendar) and the mathematical system behind it, yeilded to archaeology and cryptology. It should be noted here, that cryptanalysis goes hand in hand with the art of reading lost tongues. In the case of the Mayan calendar, there was total lack of direct information.

"Some of the sciences which have been called in to assist archaeology are sociology, political science, botany (tree-rings), physics (age of radio-active carbon), agriculture (vs. fall of Mayan empire), aerial photography (spotting unknown ruins), geology (age of lava and strata). Examining the above, in the light of our requirements, what can we learn? We see that (short of a genius with an obsession) we must have knowledge, industry, ingenuity, and intuition or imagination. The latter items are self-explanatory, and either exist or do not exist in any given person. The first item, knowledge, includes thorough knowledge of our own subject, and a wide knowledge of matters which might conceivably be useful in our researches, together with knowledge of items for which we can at present see no use! This approaches the encyclopedic, but is the only element within the control of the individual. We cannot rearrange our genes to make us more ingenious, or more energetic, or more intuitive; but we can learn, each up to his limit.

"If the above is true, what must we learn? We can learn the methods used by others, to perform the simple production calculations. This is child's play. We can isolate and learn about the different factors entering the equations; what affects them, and why. Even with this, we are still only hacks in the job required of us. Our most important job is how to find data to crank into our equations. And pure knowledge will not help us here, except to recognize and use the data, after our faculties of industry, ingenuity, intuition and knowledge of other fields, has found the data."

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